

Tablet Programs in Corrections

An overview of tablet products, practices, and considerations for correctional administrators and policymakers

This brief explores the adoption and implementation of tablets for incarcerated persons within correctional institutions in the United States. The report draws on interviews with corrections officials, technology providers, and advocates as well as secondary research to summarize lessons learned, benefits and limitations, challenges encountered, and emerging trends of tablet technology and deployment. The purpose is to provide corrections personnel, policymakers, and other stakeholders with an objective understanding of how incarcerated persons are using tablets, what outcomes have been observed, and what considerations may shape continued tablet use.

- Tablets have become central tools in correctional facilities, providing incarcerated persons with access to communication, educational programming, entertainment, and administrative systems that support operational efficiency, staff safety, and rehabilitation.
- Tablets may improve operational efficiency by digitizing communication, grievance, and scheduling processes, reducing paperwork, and allowing staff to focus on other responsibilities.
- Implementation outcomes vary across jurisdictions and depend on factors such as vendor performance, infrastructure quality, staff training, and the alignment of policies with security and rehabilitative objectives.
 - Evidence on tablet program outcomes remains mixed, particularly regarding whether these programs improve outcomes such as recidivism compared with traditional educational or rehabilitative approaches.
- Cost models (whether vendor-funded, agency-funded, or hybrid) and deployment models can influence program accessibility and how well initiatives align with rehabilitative goals.
- Successful deployment requires clear policy planning, consistent staff training, IT support, and strong leadership to ensure that tablets are used appropriately, securely, and effectively.
- Families and communities benefit when tablet programs reduce communication barriers, foster consistent contact, and provide accessible pathways for educational and rehabilitative engagement.
- Tablet programs may introduce security risks if devices are modified or jailbroken, potentially enabling access to restricted content and unauthorized communication with external parties, including victims.

U.S. correctional agencies are increasingly adopting digital technologies to address long-standing challenges in providing access to communication channels and rehabilitation services for incarcerated persons.¹ As of 2025, more than 30 state departments of corrections (DOCs) and hundreds of local jails have deployed tablets to incarcerated populations.² These devices provide controlled access to communication platforms, educational and entertainment content, and legal resources, as well as administrative tools such as commissary and grievance submission interfaces and program scheduling portals.

Correctional systems are adopting tablet programs to modernize service delivery while maintaining the security and operational standards required in correctional facilities. For decades, prisons and jails relied on in-person programs, paperwork, and physical mail systems to deliver education, communication, entertainment, and administrative services. The limitations of these approaches became particularly clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, when facility lockdowns disrupted visitation, programming, and staff operations.³

Tablet programs may offer benefits to both incarcerated individuals and correctional facility staff, but tablet adoption has raised important questions from advocates and researchers about how tablet contracts are awarded and managed. These programs have also raised concerns about security risks—such as device modification or jailbreaking—that could enable access to restricted or banned content and facilitate illicit communication with external parties including victims, similar to concerns associated with traditional phone communication systems. In addition, tablet programs have prompted a broader discussion about the long-term sustainability of technology infrastructure in secure environments, including the challenges of maintaining hardware, regularly updating software, and managing connectivity. Correctional staff are often tasked with these responsibilities even though they extend beyond staff members' primary roles, creating a need for stronger vendor support and communication. This technology brief reports on insights from correctional personnel, researchers, and vendors to inform evidence-based decision-making around tablet program procurement, implementation, and management.



Methodology

Information presented in this technology brief was gathered through a combination of semi-structured interviews and secondary research. Stakeholders were identified using existing professional networks, prior CJTEC engagements, publicly available information, and referrals provided during interviews. To capture a range of operational perspectives, outreach included 15 interviews with representatives from state DOCs and county jail systems, including information technology (IT) leads and decisionmakers, as well as technology vendors, advocates, and other subject matter experts involved in correctional technology implementation. The product descriptions and notes included in this brief are provided for informational purposes only and do not constitute an endorsement, recommendation, or approval by the National Institute of Justice or RTI International.

Qualitative interviews were conducted virtually and explored topics including tablet implementation practices, operational goals, infrastructure and integration challenges, communication and monitoring workflows, educational and rehabilitative programming, staffing and training considerations, vendor relationships, funding and procurement models, and lessons learned from deployment and ongoing management. Follow-up clarification was obtained from some participants as needed.

In addition to interviews, CJTEC analyzed publicly available secondary sources, including vendor materials, contracts, advocacy reports, news articles, government documents, academic literature, and policy resources related to correctional technology, communication systems, rehabilitation, and digital access in correctional settings. Information from interviews and secondary sources was synthesized to identify recurring themes, operational considerations, benefits, tradeoffs, and emerging trends associated with tablet use in correctional facilities.

This brief is intended to provide an overview of current practices, stakeholder perspectives, and implementation considerations. It is not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of tablet programs or establish causal relationships between tablet use and correctional outcomes.

Context – *What Are Tablets?*

Corrections-grade tablets are purpose-built for secure group environments.

Corrections-grade tablets fundamentally differ from commercial tablets in both hardware design and software architecture, reflecting the distinct operational realities and security requirements of incarcerated settings. **Figure 1** provides a side-by-side comparison of the core differences between corrections-grade and commercial tablets across operating systems, physical design, peripherals, and network connectivity. Rather than maximizing user autonomy and open connectivity, correctional devices prioritize durability, controlled access, and system-level oversight.

On the hardware side, corrections-grade tablets typically emphasize resistance to damage and misuse, fewer opportunities for contraband concealment, and limited compatibility with standard consumer accessories. These constraints help agencies standardize device management at scale while reducing risk of misuse in daily operations.

The software layer of correctional devices is similarly optimized for institutional control. Customized operating systems and administrative tools can allow facilities to manage approved applications, configure access by housing unit or individual, and monitor system integrity. This emphasis on centralized governance supports safe deployment of communication and programming tools within established policy boundaries.

Although capabilities vary by facility and vendor, tablet ecosystems commonly support a mix of communication, education, entertainment, and administrative functions, including secure e-messaging, phone calls, video visitation, e-books, law library access, commissary ordering, games, music, movies, news, podcasts, and digital submission of medical requests.



	Corrections-Grade Tablet	Commercial Tablet
		
Operating System	Customized Android with locked-down security layers	Standard Android or iOS with full user-accessible settings
Physical Design	Transparent or semi-transparent rounded cases with security fasteners; tamper-resistant construction; reinforced corners for impact resistance	Sleek metal/plastic designs; standard fasteners; designed for consumer portability
Peripherals	Cameras, microphones, USB ports, and Bluetooth completely disabled or modified to proprietary protocols	Full-featured: cameras, microphones, standard USB, Bluetooth, and NFC for consumer functionality
Network Connectivity	Isolated facility intranet via Wi-Fi or kiosk connection; no internet access; completely segregated from public networks	Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity; direct internet access; unrestricted network connections

Figure 1: Comparison of differences between corrections-grade tablets, which are purpose-built for secure, controlled environments, and consumer tablets, which are designed for open access and personalization. Corrections-grade tablets include operating system restrictions, ruggedized hardware, controlled peripheral functionality, and segregated connectivity. Correctional tablets limit or disable certain peripheral functions, but features such as microphones and cameras can be enabled when needed for approved uses, such as phone calls and video visits.

Tablets may streamline facility workflows and expand structured access to services.

Tablets provide several benefits and functions for incarcerated individuals, allowing them to access educational and entertainment content, communicate with family, and submit and track administrative requests (e.g., grievances). Digitization of requests, scheduling, and related workflows from each incarcerated individual reduces routine paperwork demands and administrative load on correctional agency staff and can improve process transparency and tracking by time-stamping submissions, logging responses, and enabling agencies to monitor whether actions are completed within established policy time frames.

Tablets also provide a controlled pathway for maintaining family connections and accessing approved education and reentry resources. **Figure 2** summarizes how these benefits distribute across key stakeholders such as incarcerated individuals, facility administrators, and vendors. These programs can support operational efficiency and rehabilitative goals while maintaining monitoring and security expectations.



Tablet vendors play a central role as infrastructure partners by providing the hardware, network systems, and software platforms. Successfully implementing and maintaining a tablet program at a correctional facility can hinge on the facility–vendor relationship. Clear communication about needs combined with well-defined roles and responsibilities creates a foundation for programs that advance operational efficiency and rehabilitative goals.

Tablet Usage and Facility Support

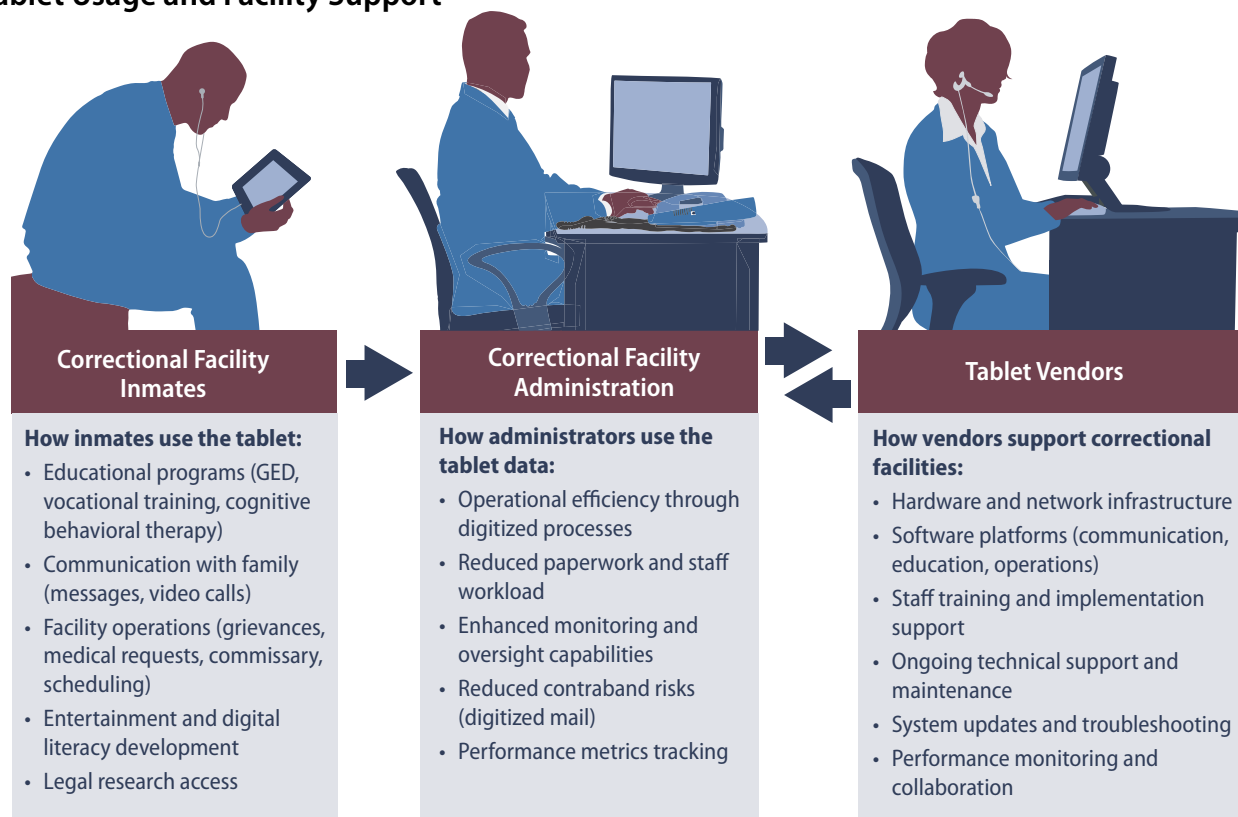


Figure 2: Tablet programs in correctional facilities provide benefits to both incarcerated individuals and correctional facility administrators.

Role of Tablets in Supporting Correctional Facilities

Tablets affect daily operations, rehabilitation and reentry services, family connections, and facility management in several ways. Tablet program implementation supports many facility goals, as noted below, leading to benefits and tradeoffs for different stakeholders within the corrections environment.

Tablets may help expand access to education and rehabilitation.

Many facilities face staff shortages, limited classroom space, and scheduling constraints that make it difficult to deliver in-person classes or therapy sessions consistently. Even when enough staff are available, they may not have the specialized expertise needed to teach certain subjects or lead specific programs.

How Tablets Help Stakeholders

- **Incarcerated individuals** gain broader access to education, GED prep, vocational training, and cognitive behavioral therapy modules; tablets reduce idle time.



- **Program staff/educators** can coordinate asynchronous learning when classrooms/instructors are unavailable, as the programming is not constrained by physical classroom space. Tablets also provide specialized training beyond local options, eliminating the burden of bringing in additional specialized support.
- **Facility administrators** may see the benefit of supporting rehabilitation goals without adding classroom space or specialized personnel.

Tradeoffs or Unintended Consequences of Tablet Implementation

- **Incarcerated individuals** may face cost barriers and inconsistent access to tablet-based services, particularly where fee-based models are used. Device malfunctions, delayed repairs, and connectivity issues can interrupt communication, education, and program participation. In some cases, access to tablet-based programming may not be consistent across facilities or may not continue after release, depending on facility policies and vendor capabilities.
- **Program staff/educators** may need to take on additional responsibilities to guide tablet-based learning. Educators may need to provide support when access to educational content is inconsistent across facilities or when technical issues disrupt course delivery or testing schedules.
- **Facility administrators** need to balance security policies with rehabilitation goals, which requires ongoing evaluation. Tablet contract models sometimes limit mid-term changes to content or technical requirements.

Tablets offer a promising method of improving access while streamlining processes; however, it is unclear whether these tools improve performance outcomes compared with traditional methods. Anecdotal evidence points to positive outcomes from tablets as they relate to conduct and facility safety; for example, in a 2026 news article, a sheriff's deputy from the Canyon County Jail (Caldwell, Idaho) describes "a decline of 40% for disturbances and fights" after introducing tablets two years prior.⁴ However, few comprehensive research studies assess whether performance outcomes of tablet-based education are equivalent to or exceed outcomes of traditional education methods for incarcerated individuals (e.g., assessing recidivism, preparation for employment and reentry). More independent research and evidence is needed to demonstrate the value of tablets.^a

Tablets may support the safety of both staff and incarcerated individuals.

Idleness or lack of family communication may drive unrest or behavior issues that threaten the well-being of incarcerated individuals and staff.

How Tablets Help Stakeholders

- **Incarcerated individuals** are provided access to a wide variety of approved communication, education, and entertainment via tablets. This content helps keep people engaged, which may reduce conflict.
- **Facility administrators** may observe fewer disciplinary incidents in certain units when incarcerated individuals have high engagement with tablets.

Tradeoffs or Unintended Consequences of Tablet Implementation

- **Custody staff** may need to deal with security concerns and follow-up tasks from device loss, misuse, or theft.
- **Facility administrators** must continuously monitor and evaluate tablet use in facilities and must stay alert for issues, such as tablet hacking or unrest from unequal access to tablet resources. For example, administrators should consider whether limiting tablet access as a disciplinary action motivates good behavior or contributes to further safety or security concerns.

a. Although tablets cannot replace traditional education altogether, both approaches may be used in tandem to provide educational content. However, this report is not meant to assess or evaluate the efficacy of these interventions.



Tablets enable streamlined communication between incarcerated individuals and loved ones.

In-person visitation may be limited by distance, scheduling conflicts, public health restrictions, or facility policies, particularly as concerns about contraband (e.g., drugs) influence access.

How Tablets Help Stakeholders

- **Incarcerated individuals** can use tablets to easily engage in video calls and messaging, supporting family connections when in-person visits are restricted or may be challenging or cost-prohibitive for the family. Tablets provide secure, monitored messaging and video calling, helping maintain family connections while reducing contraband incidents (including via digitized/managed communications).
- **Family members** are provided access to their incarcerated family members. Video calls and messaging allow communication when distance or scheduling limits in-person visits; tablet communication is faster than mail.
- **Facility administrators/custody staff** can oversee digital communications while maintaining the incarcerated individual's access to family contact. Communication monitoring tools (such as keyword flagging and audit trails) are capable of noting security and safety concerns. A tablet-communication approach may be less expensive than implementing or maintaining video visitation stations.

Tradeoffs or Unintended Consequences of Tablet Implementation

- **Family members** may struggle to afford the costs of tablet video calls and messaging. Access rules vary between facilities, making regular communication difficult across jurisdictions.
- **Incarcerated individuals** may face cost barriers and inconsistent access to tablet-based services, and connectivity issues and device malfunctions can disrupt communication.
- **Facility administrators** oversee vendor-provided monitoring systems, which still require staff time for review. Additional operational demands may include scheduling visitation (when on-demand access is not available), addressing issues raised by friends and family when technology fails, and responding to rule violations, including imposing sanctions. Increased communication may also require additional monitoring capacity. Policies must balance security needs with privacy considerations and access goals.

Tablets may reduce staff administrative burden in a resource-challenged environment.

Manual processes for grievances, scheduling, and request forms take significant staff time, and idle time in housing units can increase tension and conflicts between incarcerated individuals and staff.

How Tablets Help Stakeholders

- **Custody staff** may have more time for higher-priority tasks as tablets digitize grievances, scheduling, and requests. Incarcerated individuals are able to request information and services themselves, freeing time for custody staff to attend to security responsibilities. Some facilities see fewer grievances related to delayed communication.
- **Information technology (IT)/infrastructure staff** may experience responsibility and task offloading as vendors handle most setup and maintenance, reducing IT workload. A single system for phones, tablets, and visitation makes support and fixes easier.
- **Facility administrators** may see a reduction in manual paperwork. Digitized mail may help reduce time needed to inspect physical mail, which may limit introduction of contraband into facilities.

Tradeoffs or Unintended Consequences of Tablet Implementation

- **Custody staff** may need frequent training refreshers to successfully implement monitoring tools and device policies. Monitoring systems may reduce manual review, but they do not eliminate it; custody staff must follow up on flagged



content, which may be time-intensive. Device loss or theft may occasionally create security concerns and follow-up tasks.

- **IT/infrastructure staff** may have additional workloads and duties troubleshooting issues such as network connectivity and dead zones. Bandwidth limitations may affect reliability of tablet connectivity during high-demand periods. Integration with existing systems is challenging in some deployments.
- **Facility administrators** need to consider the fact that infrastructure upgrades involve significant planning and costs. Contract models sometimes limit mid-term changes to pricing, content, or technical requirements.

Tablets can provide structured entertainment for incarcerated individuals.

Facilities often have limited options to occupy time during periods when other programming is unavailable, contributing to idle time in housing units.

How Tablets Help Stakeholders

- **Incarcerated individuals** are granted access to approved entertainment content, which provides a structured way to stay occupied during downtime.
- **Custody staff** may see fewer routine in-person requests related to idle time as a result of granting individuals access to tablet-based entertainment.
- **Facility administrators** can manage entertainment content through approved platforms.

Tradeoffs or Unintended Consequences of Tablet Implementation

- **Incarcerated individuals'** access to tablets may vary based on custody level, disciplinary status, or cost, and technical issues may interrupt use.
- **Custody staff/administrators** are responsible for monitoring tablet use, adjusting access as needed, and enforcing policies governing permitted content and communications.

Technology Vendor Landscape^b

Correctional tablet programs are supported by a set of technology vendors that provide integrated platforms used across facilities for secure communication, program delivery, and administrative functions. **Table 1** summarizes the main categories of offerings in this space and provides representative examples.

Agencies rely on a wide variety of vendors to provide tablets and surrounding technical infrastructure; commonly used vendors include HomeWAV, Keefe Group/Trinity, NCIC Correctional Services, Orijin, Securus Technologies® (JPay), Smart Communications, Edovo, TurnKey Corrections, and ViaPath Technologies (see Table 1), among others. Across jurisdictions interviewed, agencies described vendor involvement as extending beyond initial rollout and into ongoing operations, including system configuration, updates, technical support, and training.

Although vendors commonly operate within a similar overall scope, agencies noted differences in areas of emphasis and suitability of solutions within facility workflows and constraints. Vendors vary in how they approach areas such as device management, communication, education and programming access, administrative workflows, security-related features, and mail digitization (see Table 1). Agencies emphasized the importance of evaluating vendors based on demonstrated reliability and responsiveness over time, in addition to the capabilities described in procurement materials.

b. The products referenced in this report are included solely for illustrative purposes. Their inclusion does not represent a comprehensive survey of all commercially available solutions, nor does it constitute a recommendation, endorsement, or validation of any product or its claims by the U.S. Department of Justice, the National Institute of Justice, RTI International, or the Criminal Justice Technology Testing and Evaluation Center.



Table 1: Tablet program offerings.

Offering	Examples
Hardware	▪ Keefe Group/Trinity: The SCORE 5 and SCORE 7 devices are purpose-built, locked-down tablets intended for use in correctional settings.⁵ ▪ ViaPath Technologies: ViaPath has introduced VR-based skilled trades training as an education delivery hardware add-on.⁶
Software	▪ Securus Technologies (JPAY): Securus Video Connect is positioned as a web-based system that lets approved users schedule and participate in video sessions using the app on a computer or tablet.⁷ ▪ NCIC Correctional Services: NCIC's InTouch Ticketing is a configurable software tool for digital requests, grievances, and two-way staff–resident communication.⁸
Content	▪ HomeWAV: Through its Edovo partnership, HomeWAV provides large volumes of educational and rehabilitative content on its tablets.⁹ ▪ Orijin: Orijin's Whole Learner Framework is described as cloud-based assessments and plans paired with access to education and skilled trades courses.¹⁰
Infrastructure support	▪ Securus Technologies (JPAY): EVOTAB is described as leveraging Android Enterprise, managed Google Play, and zero-touch enrollment for secure fleet deployment.¹¹ ▪ TurnKey Corrections: TurnKey positions TEAM3 as a single platform that integrates multiple facility services into one system.¹²
Security features	▪ ViaPath Technologies: ViaPath emphasizes visitation controls that reduce movement by enabling visits without leaving housing areas and allowing staff to review and access controls.¹³ ▪ Orijin: Orijin describes its artificial intelligence (AI) approach as using enterprise-level encryption, strict access controls, and data governance frameworks.¹⁴
Mail digitization and contraband reduction	▪ Smart Communications: MailGuard is marketed as a postal mail scanning/digitization workflow intended to reduce contraband and streamline mail processing.¹⁵ ▪ NCIC Inmate Communications: NCIC offers InTouch Mail Scanning with both facility-managed (on-site scanning with tools/training) and other digitization options, delivering mail to a virtual mailbox through its kiosk/tablet system.¹⁶
Technical support	▪ NCIC Correctional Services: NCIC's InTouch Ticketing includes automated reminders/escalations and searchable records that can reduce delays and improve accountability for resident requests.⁸ ▪ TurnKey Corrections: TurnKey provides a facility support channel and directs users to a dedicated support email for fastest assistance.¹²
Training	▪ TurnKey Corrections: TurnKey explicitly markets “thorough training” as part of what differentiates its TEAM3 platform for facilities.¹² ▪ Orijin: Orijin describes the AI Discovery Lab as a structured engagement that includes staff training and development components.¹⁴

Vendor selection determines how well tablet programs integrate into facility workflows, as well as the level of sustained operational effectiveness over time.

Agencies consistently described tablet programs as operational infrastructure rather than stand-alone technology deployments. Agencies emphasized that vendor platforms shape day-to-day workflows for staff and residents alike, influencing how communication, education, service requests, and security-related processes are managed at scale.



Different vendors offer comparable core capabilities, but agencies noted that differences emerge in how those capabilities are implemented, integrated, and supported over time. Corrections interviewees highlighted variation in ease of configuration, responsiveness to facility needs, alignment with staffing constraints, and the degree to which vendors are able to adapt their systems as policies, populations, or operational priorities change.

Case Study

Vendor Transition

A state DOC undertook a full transition of its communication and tablet systems after operating for several years under multiple vendors. The department's previous arrangement involved separate providers for phone and tablet services. Seeking to streamline operations and expand educational programming through a third-party platform, the department procured a unified solution from a new vendor in late 2023.

The change revealed the complexity of large-scale vendor transitions in correctional environments. The procurement process was primarily managed by executive staff, with limited input from technical and operational personnel. This created early challenges in aligning contract expectations with facility needs. Staff described the rollout as resource-intensive, requiring simultaneous retraining for both employees and incarcerated individuals. The vendor's limited support capacity led to slower response times, particularly because the new system did not include an incarcerated person-facing ticketing feature. Facility staff had to field technical issues directly, adding new layers of administrative workload.

Newer technical integration also demanded close collaboration between the vendor, IT teams, and legal counsel to address compliance and accessibility requirements. Adjustments relating to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations, pricing models, and content streaming required extensive follow-up. Early outages and messaging delays underscored the importance of strong communication between agency and vendor teams during implementation.

Despite these challenges, the transition produced valuable lessons for both the department and other correctional agencies. Officials emphasized the importance of involving technical staff throughout procurement to ensure that systems meet operational and infrastructural requirements. They also concluded that consolidating services under a single vendor can improve accountability and simplify management, provided that oversight mechanisms are also clearly defined. The experience highlighted that successful technology adoption requires not only strong contracts but also sustained coordination across leadership, operations, and IT divisions.

Cost Models

Tablet programs are typically procured through multi-year master service agreements, often structured as initial terms of approximately 3–5 years with optional renewals. Under these agreements, vendors provide bundled hardware, software, content, infrastructure, and support services. While arrangements may differ between vendors or by the size or needs of the correctional facility, these contracts often include strict service level agreements (SLAs) that document key performance standards. Examples of tablet implementation SLA standards include those for maintenance, repair, and support; system availability and catastrophic outage; retention of communication records and recordings; and data retention, backups, and recovery.¹⁷

Vendors typically offer one of two cost structures for tablet implementation, which vary based on how costs are divided between the vendor, the agency, and incarcerated individuals and their families.

Agencies typically adopt one of two cost models for tablet programs (**Table 2**), depending on what their chosen vendor offers: (1) vendor-funded “no cost to the agency” models, where costs are assumed by incarcerated individuals and families through fees, or (2) agency-funded purchase models, where costs are assumed by the agency providing the tablets.

Tablet programs are often described as either vendor-funded or agency-funded; however, some agencies adopt hybrid cost approaches that blend elements of both models. For example, agencies may assume the up-front cost of tablets or core infrastructure while incarcerated individuals and their families pay for optional content or premium services. Other programs might initially launch under vendor-funded models to minimize costs up-front, then later transition some costs—such as the cost of communication services—to the agency's public funding through public appropriations. For example, in Indiana and Vermont, stakeholders described tablet programs that are structured as “no cost” contracts to the



correctional agency, where the vendor provides hardware, infrastructure, and services at no direct cost to the facility. In practice, this means the vendor recoups costs through user-paid services and fees, and in some cases through revenue-sharing arrangements that support agency priorities (e.g., security improvements). However, stakeholders noted that this model can introduce tradeoffs, including limited financial leverage for agencies to enforce performance expectations under the contract.

Table 2: Tablet cost models.

Cost Model	Definition	Costs Assumed by the Vendor	Costs Assumed by the Agency	Costs Assumed by Incarcerated Individual and Family
Vendor-funded (i.e., no cost to agency)	Tablets are provided at no up-front cost to the agency, with vendors recouping expenses through user fees.	Tablet procurement, maintenance, infrastructure, support	None	Usage fees for content, communications, services, and sometimes device replacement
Agency-funded	Agency funds tablets, infrastructure, and services directly through state or local budgets.	None	Tablet procurement, replacement, and potentially some content and maintenance	Minimal (e.g., premium services or add-ons) or none, depending on agency policy

User fees can create financial strain for incarcerated individuals and their families.

Agencies using fee-based models reported that communication and entertainment fees can accumulate quickly for incarcerated persons. In several jurisdictions, these costs led incarcerated individuals to make tradeoffs between maintaining family contact and purchasing essential items such as hygiene or commissary products. At the same time, some stakeholders emphasized that these choices may reflect real-world decisions that incarcerated individuals will face post-release, and allowing individuals to make these decisions raises considerations around personal agency and autonomy. Some stakeholders also noted that tablet deployment models (e.g., providing one tablet for each individual versus shared access) may influence overall usage patterns and associated costs. **Table 3** provides examples of common tablet functions and examples of how select agencies describe or price these services. Actual offerings and rates vary by jurisdiction and vendor contract.

For incarcerated individuals and their families, high costs for these services can be a major burden. Because incarcerated individuals who work typically earn between \$0.13 and \$0.52 per hour,²³ many of these features are cost-prohibitive, and the financial burden falls on families.

“We know statistically that one of the biggest things that reduces recidivism is strong support networks in the community... So you’re forcing people that can barely manage this to make a choice. Do I pay my bills, put food in my house, pay my car payment, things like this? Or have anything reasonably nice? Or do I stay in contact with my loved one who made a poor decision and is in prison or might be wrongfully convicted?”²⁴

—Formerly incarcerated individual in Washington state

Public pressure and policy changes have begun to address only part of this problem. A 2023 federal law empowered the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to cap call rates nationwide; however, text messages and digital media on tablets are not covered by those caps.¹⁸ As a result, vendors are shifting focus to tablets. As one investigation noted, telecom vendors like Securus Technologies and ViaPath now see growth in tablet messaging, streaming, and content as their new revenue maker.²⁵ However, it remains unclear whether the FCC will extend rate caps or similar regulations to these additional forms of communication.



Table 3: Tablet features, description, and price per use.

Functions/Features/ Services	Description	Example Prices
Video visitation	Live video communication with family or friends using a tablet	- Texas Department of Criminal Justice: One free 1-hour visit per month; \$10 per hour for others²⁰ - Maine DOC: \$0.25 per minute¹⁹
Music	Download or streaming access to individual songs or full albums	- Washington DOC: \$0.69–\$1.99 + tax per song²¹ - Harris County Jail (Texas): \$1.19–\$2.23 per song²²
Movies/TV shows	Rental or purchase of movies or TV episodes for viewing on tablets	- Harris County Jail (Texas): \$0.99–\$2.99 per episode²² - New York City: \$2–\$25 per movie; \$21.99 per month for “gold package” subscription with 100 newly released movies and TV shows each month¹⁸
E-books/ audiobooks	Digital books or audiobooks accessed via tablet platforms (non-educational)	Washington DOC: Free; premium options at posted prices (\$0–\$14.99 per book)²¹
Educational courses	Vocational or personal development courses beyond core education offerings	Educational content on tablets is usually provided for free or included in the service¹⁸
Internal institutional services	Non-emergency, internal institutional services/requests (e.g., grievances, medical requests, commissary orders)	Internal institutional services are usually free²²

Shared-cost or transparency-focused approaches (e.g., rate caps) can help reduce burdens and broaden access for incarcerated individuals and their families.

At the state and local level, some corrections systems have experimented with free tablet content. San Francisco’s jails now partner with its public library to provide free tablets pre-loaded with books, music, and movies (the city pays the library \$5K–\$10K per week for this content).¹⁸ Some states have approached responsible use through shared-cost or transparency-based models. For example, the Indiana DOC adopted a structure that funds core education and communication services through the agency but charges for premium content, broadening access while reducing financial strain on families. The Vermont DOC emphasized public transparency by releasing its ViaPath contract, implementing rate caps, and engaging advocacy groups during implementation to build community trust.

Case Study

Balancing Access with Free and Paid Digital Services

In a request for proposals, the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO) explicitly sought a vendor capable of supporting both free digital services and paid entertainment content. Through this dual-profile system, the MCSO ensured fair access to essential digital resources while also offering optional paid services for non-essential entertainment.

Incarcerated individuals with free profiles can access grievance and request forms, facility-wide announcements, and documents directly on their tablets. They can also read selected books from Project Gutenberg,²⁶ play basic free games, and take part in educational programs through Edovo, which offers more than 750 courses spanning topics such as anger management, meditation, and GED preparation. Paid profiles provide access to additional entertainment options such as movies, games, and other content, with messaging and phone services also available at an additional cost. This tiered model reflects the MCSO’s approach to combining rehabilitation-oriented access with optional additional amenities/services/entertainment.



Lessons Learned: Tablet Adoption and Implementation

Operational Considerations

This section outlines the operational foundations needed to implement and sustain tablet programs, including policies for access and acceptable use, procedures for loss/damage and monitoring, and data governance and retention standards, as well as the workforce, training, and culture changes required for adoption.

Policies and Procedures

Some jurisdictions stated that starting with clear policies was one of the most important steps when rolling out tablet programs. Agencies found it helpful to decide early who should get access—for example, whether eligibility should depend on custody level, disciplinary record, or participation in certain programs. They also developed policies outlining approved tablet uses, content restrictions, communication monitoring, and disciplinary responses to misuse. By establishing these policies early, administrators could better identify security risks, define staff and vendor responsibilities, and understand how tablet use might affect daily operations before expanding access facility-wide.

Some agencies established procedures to address tablet loss, theft, or damage, including clear protocols for reporting and replacement.²⁷ Agencies also emphasized the importance of clearly defined policies for tablet distribution, collection, and responses to rule violations. Establishing consistent procedures for how devices are issued, retrieved, and restricted in response to misuse supports accountability and helps reinforce staff confidence in the program. Some facilities implemented structured access, such as scheduled checkouts, and others allowed in-cell use with monitoring systems. Policies typically defined responsibilities for both staff and incarcerated individuals to promote accountability and reduce misuse or tablet-related disciplinary issues. Communication monitoring policies with keyword-flagging systems and manual review procedures were noted to help prevent unauthorized messaging while maintaining security requirements.

Agencies also emphasized the importance of aligning access policies with rehabilitation goals. This alignment ensures that pricing structures or disciplinary restrictions do not inadvertently limit participation in education or family communication programs. Facility administrators stressed the need for structured policy review processes after initial deployment, as early experiences often reveal gaps in access rules, security procedures, or maintenance protocols that require clarification. Agencies with structured review processes in place reported fewer operational challenges and smoother program expansion compared with those that relied on ad hoc policy changes. Staff at the Vermont DOC described intentionally involving a broad cross-section of personnel early in the policy development process, using demonstrations and feedback sessions to identify what would be most useful in day-to-day operations before finalizing rules regarding access and use.

Data Management

Modern tablet systems collect extensive data across multiple categories (e.g., communication content, geolocation information, financial transaction records, personal identifiers, behavioral usage patterns). All this data can create significant privacy and security obligations for correctional agencies. Current implementations vary widely in their approach to data retention. Some vendors maintain extended or potentially open-ended storage practices. For example, Securus Technologies' contract language indicates that although messages may only be accessible to users for a limited period, underlying data may be retained by the vendor or agency for multiple years beyond use (e.g., up to 60 months in a county contract). Similarly, Smart Communications' terms grant a perpetual license to user-generated content, suggesting that messages and media may be retained indefinitely.^{28,29} These examples highlight that retention practices are not standardized and may extend well beyond the active use of tablet services. In addition, the scope of data collection may extend beyond incarcerated individuals to potentially include family members and external contacts who



communicate through these platforms, which raises additional privacy concerns that agencies must address through clear policy frameworks.

Importantly, interviews with stakeholders revealed that many of the specifics surrounding data collection, monitoring practices, and retention timelines are dictated by the vendor rather than the correctional agency. Vendor contracts typically define the technical capabilities and operational parameters of the tablet systems. In most cases, agencies influence practices through initial contract negotiations or by working collaboratively with the vendor to request specific accommodations. As a result, privacy, pricing, and operational decisions are usually standardized across the vendor's service portfolio. Interviewees from the Illinois DOC noted that changes to pricing structures and service models were decided at the executive level, with limited visibility for facility staff into how those decisions were made, reinforcing the importance of contract clarity and internal communication during vendor negotiations.

Workforce, Training, and Culture

The introduction of tablet programs in correctional facilities involves more than just deploying a new technology; it requires shared understanding, staff buy-in, and ongoing support from leadership. Agencies consistently reported that staff acceptance and training were among the most critical factors influencing implementation success. Several agencies noted that staff buy-in was instrumental to successful implementation, particularly when tablet programs introduced new responsibilities such as device management or communication monitoring. In some cases, additional operational tasks, such as daily charging and inventory management, created friction during early adoption. Agencies found that demonstrating indicators of measurable performance improvements, such as reductions in paperwork or improved response times for grievances, helped reinforce the value of tablet programs and improve staff acceptance over time. In most cases, both staff and incarcerated individuals were already familiar with digital devices, allowing agencies to focus training on policies, security procedures, and communication monitoring rather than basic operation. Training was mostly directed at staff and covered device functionality, account management, and oversight protocols; incarcerated individuals often received a brief orientation or written guidance on appropriate use. While many vendors provided initial onboarding, agencies emphasized that ongoing training opportunities were preferred over one-time sessions. Staff needed continued reinforcement tailored to their daily responsibilities and clear guidance on when and how to intervene in cases of suspected misuse.

Cultural adjustment proved equally significant. In early stages, staff in several facilities viewed tablets as privileges rather than operational tools. Over time, attitudes shifted as officers observed reductions in manual paperwork, fewer routine information requests, and improved efficiency in grievance management and communication. Some of the facilities that introduced tablets as tools to streamline daily operations and support rehabilitation—rather than as rewards for good behavior—reported smoother adoption and less resistance among staff. Even after rollout, workforce considerations remained. Expanded monitoring responsibilities created new demands for time and attention, particularly where keyword flagging required manual review by correctional officers or IT staff. Agencies also recognized the importance of consistent training across shifts and new hires to maintain uniform application of policies. Staff at the Vermont DOC emphasized that involving line staff early and reinforcing training across roles helped normalize tablet use as part of routine operations rather than an added burden.



Case Study

Leadership and Staff Buy-In to Improve Program Success

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) operates one of the ten largest jail systems in the United States, with an average daily population of approximately 7,500 inmates across six facilities and more than 100,000 bookings processed annually.³⁰ When the MCSO launched its tablet program in April 2020, the goal was to combine phones, video visitation, and digital paperwork under one vendor contract with ViaPath Technologies and to give every incarcerated individual access to a tablet at a 1:1 ratio. The rollout began just as COVID-19 restrictions halted visitations. Vendor staff could not enter the facilities, so MCSO personnel provided short, in-house orientations to incarcerated individuals. The timing proved significant: Tablets became the only way for people in custody to maintain contact with family when visitation centers closed.

Staff perception, not the technology itself, determined whether the rollout succeeded. Many officers were already familiar with digital devices and adapted quickly. As the program stabilized, clear benefits emerged. During the first year, the agency processed more than 300,000 electronic documents, which reduced manual paperwork, mail handling, and legal-service requests. Tablets also supported digital grievance filing and access to education through the Edovo platform, which officers said eased daily workloads.

The greatest operational challenge was the increase in message monitoring. Communication traffic grew from hundreds of messages each day to thousands, creating a new workload for the intelligence unit responsible for keyword review. Monitoring efforts focused on identifying potential criminal or safety-related communications (e.g., threats, contraband coordination, or internal violence), not device-level misuse. Captain Jannis Mossman noted that this required additional staffing and procedural planning, although serious incidents were rare.

Mossman credited the program's longevity to leadership engagement, collaboration with justice and health partners, and ongoing readiness planning. Internal stakeholders meet every 2 weeks to review performance and address issues. The MCSO also kept wall phones and paper systems as backups to ensure continuity when tablets were offline.

The MCSO's experience demonstrates that long-term adoption depends on culture, structure, and leadership as much as on technology. The agency's deliberate planning, continuous evaluation, and commitment to collaboration created a foundation that allowed the system to evolve and remain stable over time. Other jurisdictions can draw from this approach by emphasizing communication, maintaining redundant systems, and treating technology integration as an ongoing management process rather than a one-time deployment.

"Get a core team together and work with your partners. We are 5 years into it and still meet every 2 weeks"—highlighting that consistent communication and oversight, rather than technology alone, sustain success.

—Captain Mossman, Maricopa County

Technical Considerations

This section outlines technical considerations for tablet programs, including infrastructure readiness and network reliability, integration with existing correctional systems, ongoing maintenance and support, and the technical controls used to manage security and monitoring.

Technical Infrastructure and System Integration

System reliability remains one of the most significant technical concerns identified by correctional agencies. Facilities depend on stable, high-bandwidth networks to support video communication, educational content delivery, and grievance systems. Older facilities, some of which lack sufficient network infrastructure, reported frequent connectivity issues and uneven access across housing units, which disrupted both programming and administrative workflows. Some agencies invested in redundant systems (e.g., duplicate servers, extra internet connections) to minimize downtime during maintenance or outages. Establishing minimum technical performance standards and continuous monitoring protocols was viewed as essential for sustaining reliability over time.



These infrastructure needs are closely tied to implementation models; agencies must determine whether tablets are assigned at a 1:1 ratio or shared, whether access is permitted within cells or limited to common areas, and whether sufficient charging capacity is available to support device usage at scale, all of which have direct implications for network coverage (e.g., Wi-Fi reach into housing units), bandwidth demands, and hardware requirements. In some facilities, particularly older housing units, limited or absent electrical infrastructure requires tablets to be collected, inventoried, and charged centrally on a daily basis. This process introduces additional workload for staff and requires clear procedures for tracking devices, managing inventory, and ensuring timely redistribution. Hardware durability is also a key consideration: Agencies noted the importance of protecting charging ports and headphone jacks from damage, using tamper-resistant fasteners, and maintaining an adequate supply of replacement devices to support continuous operations.

Compatibility with existing correctional systems also remains a key challenge. In some agencies, vendor-provided proprietary software limits how data can be accessed or shared, making it difficult to connect tablets with existing management systems and requiring custom development or additional costs. Integration between tablets and incarcerated-person management systems allows staff to monitor usage, update records automatically, and reduce manual data entry into multiple systems. Staff at the Illinois DOC noted that these integration challenges became more visible during vendor transitions, when workflows and interfaces changed and staff had to adapt quickly.

Maintenance and technical support are also major determinants of program success. Agencies reported that long repair timelines and delayed software updates can interrupt operations and reduce user confidence. Offloading technical issues to vendor support staff may lead to bottlenecks if vendors lack responsiveness and the agency's internal IT resources lack the training or access requirements to resolve issues.

Implementing and managing tablet systems requires collaboration across multiple departments, including security or correctional staff, IT, education, and facility administration, as well as legal and medical teams, particularly where functions such as grievances, telehealth, and tele-mental health services introduce privacy considerations (e.g., HIPAA compliance). Agencies that coordinated early among these groups, along with external partners such as vendors, legal counsel, and advocacy organizations, reported fewer integration issues and clearer accountability structures once systems went live. The Vermont DOC described involving staff from multiple roles early in planning and vendor demonstrations, which helped surface operational concerns before final configuration and deployment. Collaborative planning also helped ensure that access policies, grievance systems, and content moderation protocols aligned with both operational and rehabilitative objectives.

Continuous evaluation is critical for maintaining accountability and guiding program improvement. Most agencies track operational metrics (e.g., system uptime, device repairs, usage rates), but few systematically measure rehabilitative outcomes (e.g., educational progress, behavioral changes). Developing evaluation frameworks that combine operational and rehabilitative indicators can help agencies demonstrate value to leadership and funding bodies while supporting data-driven decisions about system expansion or vendor renewal.

Security and Monitoring

Although the introduction of tablets may reduce administrative burden of certain tasks, such as physical mail inspection, these tools require introduction of new administrative challenges and workflows related to maintaining facility security and monitoring tablet use. Tablet programs use controls to reduce tampering and workarounds, including no open internet, cameras and ports disabled, device tamper alerts, and routine software updates. Interviews with multiple jurisdictions noted that incarcerated individuals may attempt to modify devices or route communications to restricted channels; in response, agencies paired these controls with procedures such as intake checks, inventory tracking, and defined incident escalation. Routine screening of digital communications is common. Agencies described automated keyword flagging followed by documented human review. Some facilities reported biweekly coordination meetings



and a defined review workflow; other jurisdictions described similar practices, including standing vendor check-ins and service tickets. Agencies also reported that tablet deployment significantly increased the volume and speed of communications, including phone calls and electronic messages. This expansion can create additional monitoring demands, as staff must review a larger volume of communications for institutional safety. The ability for near real-time communication, including features such as rapid messaging and three-way calling, was identified as a potential security concern, as it may increase opportunities for coordinated or unauthorized communication. As a result, monitoring workflows were described as both labor-intensive and critical to maintaining facility security.

Policies typically address protected communications (e.g., attorney–client), data retention and access, and consistent application of rules across units. Programs reported tracking a small set of operational measures (e.g., tamper alerts, software patch and repair turnaround, uptime, message review queue size) and using contract language (e.g., response times, performance reviews) to support vendor accountability. Some agencies also noted that separating essential services from optional entertainment reduced pressure to bypass controls.

Case Study

AI-Powered Intelligence Analysis

Tablet programs generate large volumes of digital communications data (e.g., phone calls, messages, emails, video visits), and correctional agencies face the significant challenge of manually reviewing this information for security threats. This challenge is not new, as agencies have historically been unable to monitor more than a small fraction of communications even through traditional channels, such as phone calls and letters. Two technology platforms now use artificial intelligence (AI) to address this challenge: ViaPath's SAFESuite™ and LeoTech's VerusAI system.

ViaPath SAFESuite integrates AI directly into its tablet ecosystem to improve communication management and security oversight. The platform's AI tools analyze data from disparate sources to reveal illicit activity, expose suspicious patterns, and discover hidden networks.³³ SAFESuite's proprietary Mobile Device Management system combines real-time data analytics with AI to monitor engagement levels, identify security risks, and provide facility-wide dashboards for staff oversight. According to ViaPath, the AI integration improves task performance and data retrieval, allowing security staff to configure alerts and focus investigative resources on flagged communications rather than manually reviewing all inmate interactions.^{31,32}

LeoTech's VerusAI operates as a third-party add-on that works across multiple tablet vendor platforms.³³ Powered by AI and natural language processing built on Amazon Web Services infrastructure, VerusAI automatically transcribes inmate phone calls in near real-time and identifies keywords to flag potentially problematic communications.³⁴ The system provides proactive alerts when specific keywords or phrases appear, performs link analysis to map communication networks between incarcerated individuals and outside contacts, and operates in a continuous surveillance environment. LeoTech has deployed in California, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Texas, New York, and Louisiana, monitoring calls from more than 100,000 incarcerated individuals totaling approximately 1 million calls per year.³³

These tools are designed to improve efficiency and enhance monitoring capabilities; however, independent evidence on their effectiveness in correctional settings remains limited. Publicly available information largely reflects vendor-reported capabilities, with limited transparency into real-world performance outcomes. Policy and research organizations have noted that the adoption of AI in corrections has outpaced formal evaluation and oversight frameworks.³⁵ Additionally, reporting on AI-enabled surveillance in correctional environments has raised concerns related to privacy, bias, and the opacity of automated monitoring systems.³⁶ Overall, although AI-enabled monitoring systems show promise in supporting staff workflows and managing large volumes of communications, there is limited independent evidence demonstrating measurable impacts on institutional safety or operational outcomes.

Responsible Use, Legal and Regulatory Issues, and Community

This section outlines the legal and regulatory issues shaping inmate tablet programs, including gaps in federal oversight of digital communications; risks related to pricing, privacy, and attorney–client confidentiality; and the importance of contract design and data governance in protecting users and families. It also considers how these legal and policy choices affect families and communities, highlighting affordability concerns, fairness implications, and evidence on how digital access can support communication, reentry, and well-being when implemented responsibly.

Legal Considerations

At the national level, the FCC's 2024 reforms under the Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act placed caps on interstate and intrastate phone calls, limiting most rates to approximately \$0.12–\$0.14 per minute and



prohibiting hidden site commissions.^{37,38} However, these regulations do not yet extend to tablet-based messaging or video visitation services, which remain unregulated. Advocacy organizations such as the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) and the Prison Policy Initiative have cautioned that this regulatory gap allows vendors to shift revenue from regulated phone calls to unregulated digital services, potentially sustaining the same financial burden on families.^{19,39} These findings suggest that responsible use of digital access depends not on whether tablet programs are free to agencies, but on whether the services remain affordable and transparent for users and their families. Experiences from the Illinois DOC reinforce this concern. The department's recent vendor transition highlighted how pricing structures, service models, and contract expectations can become more complex when communication services are consolidated or restructured, underscoring the need for careful scrutiny of affordability and transparency during procurement and implementation.

Experts and legal practitioners also highlighted the importance of establishing clear legal and regulatory safeguards within these systems. Protecting attorney–client privileged communications requires deliberate policy design and technical controls. Some vendors' terms of service disclaim confidentiality protections, creating potential constitutional concerns if privileged exchanges are monitored or retained. Agencies such as the Virginia DOC have mitigated these risks by involving legal counsel during procurement, embedding privacy and confidentiality requirements in contracts, and defining internal procedures for handling legal communications.

The legal and regulatory framework also extends to how data are collected, stored, and shared. Interviews indicated that vendor practices vary widely: Some retain communications indefinitely, while others define limited retention. The Virginia DOC emphasized the importance of specifying data ownership, access permissions, and retention or deletion schedules within contracts to reduce uncertainty for staff and limit potential misuse. These examples suggest that jurisdictions that proactively align contract terms, operational policies governing data access and monitoring, and oversight mechanisms with privacy and affordability goals are better positioned to ensure fairer access and sustained trust in digital correctional systems.

Correctional administrators also emphasized that contracts should specify data ownership, access permissions, and deletion schedules to maintain compliance with privacy standards and limit potential misuse. They also noted the importance of ensuring data portability, including the ability to access, export, and transfer data in a usable format when transitioning between vendors, as limitations in interoperability can create operational and contractual challenges. Agencies that proactively align contract terms, operational policies (e.g., procedures governing data access, monitoring, and user communications), and oversight mechanisms with privacy and affordability goals are better positioned to ensure fairer access and sustained trust in digital correctional systems.

Impact on Families, Communities, and Corrections Staff

The introduction of tablet programs affects not only incarcerated individuals but also their families and broader communities. Families reported that digital communication provides reliable and flexible means of maintaining contact, particularly in facilities where in-person visitation is limited.⁴⁰ However, some agencies observed that the financial cost of communication can strain family budgets, especially among lower-income households or families supporting multiple incarcerated relatives. To address these concerns, some jurisdictions, including Indiana and Vermont, have subsidized fully funded communication services. These approaches have been linked to stronger engagement and higher participation in education and reentry programs.

Research findings align with these observations. Studies by the RAND Corporation have shown that access to educational and communication programming correlates with lower recidivism and improved reentry outcomes.⁴¹ The Lumina Foundation similarly notes that fair digital access supports smoother reintegration following incarceration.⁴² At the same time, advocacy groups such as the Prison Policy Initiative caution that digital communication should complement rather than replace in-person visitation, as personal contact remains a critical factor for maintaining strong family relationships.¹⁹



Several agencies also described indirect impacts on staff safety that extended to families and the broader facility environment. Interviewees noted that expanded tablet access reduced the volume of in-person requests, movements, and interactions that staff needed to manage on housing units, which they associated with lower tension and fewer opportunities for conflict. Staff emphasized that when daily communication, requests, and programming could be handled digitally, housing units tended to operate more smoothly, creating a more stable environment for both incarcerated individuals and staff. These operational effects were described as supporting safer, more predictable facilities overall—though agencies stressed that such benefits depended on clear policies, monitoring practices, and sustained program management rather than the technology alone.

Future Use

Tablet use in U.S. correctional facilities is likely to increase beyond 2026, with the potential to offer meaningful improvements in education, communication, and operational efficiency. As infrastructure modernizes and policy barriers ease, tablets will become central to delivering rehabilitative services and streamlining administrative functions. Digital platforms will provide secure access to educational content, entertainment, vocational training, legal resources, and mental health support, while enhanced communication tools such as video calling and messaging will help maintain family connections.¹⁹ Replacing physical materials (e.g., mail, phones) with digital content can reduce costs, improve sanitation, and limit contraband risks, including through mail digitization tools such as Smart Communications' MailGuard® and more secure, tablet-friendly visitation options such as ViaPath's VisitEverywhere™ enhancements.^{13,15}

Operationally, tablets will automate routine tasks including commissary orders, medical scheduling, and grievance submissions, saving staff time and improving service delivery. Vendors are also moving toward tighter integration with facility systems and broader administrative uses, including NCIC's planned deeper integration with correctional management systems, Smart Communications' focus on using tablet-generated data insights to broaden security and administrative use cases, and TurnKey Corrections' efforts to further integrate commissary and communications services (through TEAM3) and inform future updates through ongoing research and development.¹² AI and machine learning can support real-time monitoring, behavioral risk detection, and predictive analytics for violence prevention and resource management, and vendor road maps increasingly reflect this direction through corrections-tailored AI initiatives, as noted by Orijin and Keefe Group/Trinity as well as TurnKey's interest in expanding AI capabilities.^{12,14,43}

These technologies also enable personalized learning and reentry planning, helping individuals build digital literacy and ease post-release transitions.⁴¹ Several vendors are explicitly developing reentry-focused tools, including Securus Technologies' R3UP reentry readiness platform with AI enhancements and Job1Stop job-search application, and Orijin's Whole Learner Framework™ linking in-custody trade skills to post-release apprenticeship and entry-level job pathways.^{44,45} Some of these tools can be accessed through any internet-enabled device, including smartphones, so individuals can easily access materials post-release.

With thoughtful implementation, tablet integration can support rehabilitation, reduce recidivism, and strengthen correctional system outcomes, thus maximizing the impact of tablet use in correctional facilities.



Key Considerations for Facilities

Considerations	Questions to Ask
Purpose and Goals	☐ What baseline data will be collected before implementation to measure program impact? ☐ Who and to what level should be involved in determining the goals of a tablet implementation (e.g., correctional facility, incarcerated individuals, advocates, other stakeholders)? ☐ What outcomes does the agency expect (e.g., reduced recidivism, improved family connections, reduced idle time, cost savings)?
Technical Considerations	Compatibility and Integration ☐ Does the tablet platform integrate with existing management systems, learning platforms, and administrative software? Quality ☐ How will the agency ensure the tablets remain functional and secure over time? ☐ Who is responsible for ongoing device maintenance, updates, and replacements?
Operational Considerations	Funding ☐ What is the estimated cost of acquisition, deployment, and ongoing maintenance? ☐ Which funding model best aligns with agency goals: no-cost (vendor-funded), purchase (agency-funded), or hybrid approach? Policy and Procedure ☐ What eligibility rules will govern tablet access based on custody level, disciplinary history, or program participation? ☐ What communication monitoring policies will be implemented (e.g., keyword flagging, manual review procedures)? ☐ How will policies align with rehabilitation goals while maintaining security requirements? ☐ How does the agency ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities and accommodate language needs (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] compliance, translation services, multilingual interfaces)? Data Management ☐ What types of data will be collected from tablet use? Who will have access to this data, and how will it be stored, retained, and shared? Workforce and Culture ☐ How will staff roles and responsibilities change with tablet deployment, particularly regarding monitoring duties? ☐ What ongoing workforce alignment strategies will ensure security is maintained while realizing program benefits? Training ☐ What training will staff need to administer, monitor, and troubleshoot tablets? Who will provide this training (e.g., vendor)?
Governance Considerations	Community ☐ How will digital and in-person communication opportunities be balanced to maintain meaningful family connections? ☐ What community input should be incorporated from advocacy organizations, family members, and formerly incarcerated individuals? Responsible Use ☐ How will the agency ensure fair and reasonable access across different custody levels, housing units, and individual circumstances? Legal and Regulatory ☐ How will the agency stay current with evolving telecommunications regulations and rate cap requirements?



References

- Feng, D. "April." (2024, December 20). *Transforming the carceral experience: Leveraging technology for rehabilitation*. Federation of American Scientists. <https://fas.org/publication/transforming-the-carceral-experience-leveraging-technology-for-rehabilitation/>
- Caplan, G. (2024, May 6). *They bought tablets in prison—and found a broken promise*. WIRED. <https://www.wired.com/story/electronic-tablets-in-federal-prisons-chat-apps-disabled/>
- Reisdorf, B. C. (2023). Locked in and locked out: How COVID-19 is making the case for digital inclusion of incarcerated populations. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 68(9), 1180–1199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642231155369>
- Ferguson, D. (2026, January 1). *Computer tablets cut jail fights, ease staff burden at Idaho jail*. Corrections 1. <https://www.corrections1.com/jail-management/computer-tablets-cut-jail-fights-ease-staff-burden-at-idaho-jail>
- Keefe Group. (n.d.). *SCORE Tablet*. Keefe Group. <https://www.keefegroup.com/services/score-tablet/>
- ViaPath Technologies. (2024, October 28). *ViaPath Technologies brings virtual reality training to prisons*. ViaPath Technologies. <https://www.viopath.com/media-center/viopath-technologies-brings-virtual-reality-training-to-prisons/>
- Securus Technologies. (n.d.). *Video visitation*. Securus Technologies. <https://securustechnologies.tech/corrections/communication/video-visitation/>
- NCIC. (n.d.). *Ticketing*. NCIC. <https://www.ncic.com/ticketing>
- HomeWAV. (n.d.). *ComPAS tablets*. HomeWAV. <https://www.homewav.com/corrections/compas-tablets/>
- Orijin. (n.d.). *Fast Company*. Orijin. <https://orijin.works/fast-company/>
- Aventiv Technologies. (2025, January 9). *Securus Technologies pilots groundbreaking tablets for correctional facilities*. Aventiv Technologies. <https://aventiv.com/securus-technologies-pilots-groundbreaking-tablets-for-correctional-facilities/>
- TurnKey Corrections. (n.d.). *TurnKey Corrections*. TurnKey Corrections. <https://www.turnkeycorrections.com/>
- ViaPath Technologies. (2022, October). *VIA Video Visitation one-pager*. ViaPath Technologies. <https://www.viopath.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/VIA-Video-Visitation-ONE-PAGER-r5.pdf>
- Orijin. (n.d.). *Why correctional education needs human-first AI solutions*. Orijin. <https://orijin.works/why-correctional-education-needs-human-first-ai-solutions/>
- Smart Communications. (n.d.). *MailGuard*. Smart Communications. <https://www.smartcommunications.us/mailguard.cfm>
- NCIC. (n.d.). *Mail scanning*. NCIC. <https://www.ncic.com/mail-scanning>
- STQLP. (n.d.). *Contract C5611826 A1 IC signed*. STQLP. <https://q.stqlp.org/wp-content/uploads/Contract-C5611826-A1-IC-signed.pdf>
- Human Rights Defense Center. (2024, September 1). *\$13 video calls, \$25 movie tablets connect prisoners at a steep price*. Human Rights Defense Center.
- Maine Department of Corrections. (2018, September 14). *Maine DOC tablet contract. Prison Policy Initiative*. https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/Maine_DOC_TabletContract.pdf
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice. (n.d.). *Remote video visitation*. Texas Department of Criminal Justice. <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/news/remoted-video-visitation.html>
- Washington State Department of Corrections. (n.d.). *Securus services*. Washington State Department of Corrections. <https://doc.wa.gov/family-support/send-something/securus-services/>
- Prison Legal News. (2025, March 1). *Pay-for-play tablets: The costly new prison paradigm*. Prison Legal News. <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2025/mar/1/pay-play-tablets-costly-new-prison-paradigm/>
- American Civil Liberties Union. (2022, June 15). *Captive labor: Exploitation of incarcerated workers*. American Civil Liberties Union. <https://www.adu.org/publications/captive-labor-exploitation-incarcerated-workers>
- Caputo, A. (2024, December 9). *Prison telecom providers exploit tablet services*. Prism Reports. <https://prismreports.org/2024/12/09/prison-telcom-providers-exploit-tablet-services/>
- Caputo, A. (2024, December 9). *Prison telecom providers are shifting strategy by exploiting tablet services*. McGraw Center for Business Journalism. <https://www.mcgrawcenter.org/stories/prison-telcom-providers-are-shifting-strategy-by-exploiting-tablet-services/>
- Project Gutenberg. (n.d.). *Project Gutenberg*. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/>
- Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). *Fla. Admin. Code Ann. R. 33-602.900*. Cornell Law School. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/florida/Fla-Admin-Code-Ann-R-33-602-900>
- SmartInmate. (2023, December 7). *Terms of service*. SmartInmate. <https://www.smartinmate.com/terms-of-service.cfm>
- Weber County. (2025, April 23). *Securus agreement*. Weber County, Utah. <https://www.webercountyutah.gov/commission/documents/uploads/G11%20%20Securus.pdf>
- Maricopa County. (n.d.). *About Correctional Health Services*. Maricopa County. <https://www.maricopa.gov/5161/About-Correctional-Health-Services-CHS>
- CBS42. (2025, August 11). *ViaPath Technologies unveils SAFESuite: A next-gen correctional technology solution*. CBS42. <https://www.cbs42.com/business/press-releases/ein-presswire/838632768/viopath-technologies-unveils-safesuite-a-next-gen-correctional-technology-solution/>
- 8 News Now. (2025, August 19). *ViaPath Technologies launches AI moderation to enhance facility operations with smarter, more efficient solutions*. 8 News Now. <https://www.8newsnow.com/business/press-releases/ein-presswire/839218524/viopath-technologies-launches-ai-moderation-to-enhance-facility-operations-with-smarter-more-efficient-solutions/>
- LEO Technologies. (n.d.). *Verus*. LEO Technologies. <https://leotechnologies.com/verus/>
- WPTV. (2025, December 3). *AI is now screening prison communications to forecast crimes*. WPTV. <https://www.wptv.com/science-and-tech/artificial-intelligence/ai-is-now-screening-prison-communications-to-forecast-crimes>
- Pitts, D., & Kim, K. (2026, February 4). *Responsible AI adaptation in corrections: Balancing innovation, oversight, and human dignity*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/responsible-ai-adaptation-corrections>
- Pitts, D. (2026, February 12). *How AI can help address safety and rehabilitation in prisons*. Government Technology. <https://www.govtech.com/voices/how-ai-can-help-address-safety-and-rehabilitation-in-prisons>
- Federal Communications Commission. (2024, July 22). *FCC caps exorbitant phone and video call rates for incarcerated persons and their families*. Federal Communications Commission. <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-caps-exorbitant-phone-video-call-rates-incarcerated-persons-their-families>
- Reuters. (2024, July 18). *Inmate phone call costs slashed by U.S. agency*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/inmate-phone-call-costs-slashed-by-us-agency-2024-07-18/>
- Johnson, A. (2024, August 29). *"Free" prison tablets: In promise and in practice*. Electronic Privacy Information Center. <https://epic.org/free-prison-tablets-in-promise-and-in-practice/>
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. (2021, March 1). *Tablet project enhances communications for incarcerated population*. California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/insidcdcr/2021/03/01/tablet-project-enhances-communications-for-incarcerated-population/>
- Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. N. V. (2014, March 18). *How effective is correctional education, and where do we go from here?* RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR564.html
- Vera Institute of Justice & Higher Learning Commission. (2022, October 11). *Postsecondary education in prison programs and accreditation: General considerations for peer reviewers and accreditors*. Lumina Foundation. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/resource/postsecondary-education-in-prison-programs-and-accreditation/>
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2024, December 3). *Artificial intelligence and criminal justice: Final report*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/olp/media/1381796/dl>
- Aventiv Technologies. (2024, October 24). *Fueling fair chances: Securus expands reentry tools on tablets for Digital Equity Month*. Aventiv Technologies. <https://aventiv.com/fueling-fair-chances-securus-expands-reentry-tools-on-tablets-for-digital-equity-month/>
- Interplay Learning. (2024, February 28). *Orijin partners with Interplay Learning to scale up access to skilled trades workforce development in correctional facilities*. Interplay Learning. <https://www.interplaylearning.com/newsroom/orijin-partners-with-interplay-learning-to-scale-up-access-to-skilled-trades-workforce-development-in-correctional-facilities/>

Published: July 2026

More Information

Steven Schuetz

Senior Science Advisor/Physical Scientist
National Institute of Justice
U.S. Department of Justice
Steven.Schuetz@usdoj.gov
Tel +1-202-598-9388

Michael Planty, PhD

Senior Director, Research & Evaluation Center
RTI International
mplanty@rti.org
Tel +1-202-728-1955

Suggested Citation

Gomez Cardoso, A., Hale, B., Camello, M., Ropero Miller, J., Shute, R., & Planty, M. (2026). *Tablet Programs in Corrections: An overview of tablet products, practices, and considerations for correctional administrators and policymakers*. RTI International. <https://cjttec.org/>

CJTTEC would like to thank Inv. Lieutenant Shawn Springsteen, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, and Joe Russo, University of Denver, for serving as external reviewers for this document. CJTTEC would also like to thank Shari Lambert and Jana Ramsey of RTI International for their expertise and insights in developing this document.

This publication was made possible by Award Number 15PNJ-23-GK-00931-NUB awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

<https://cjttec.org/>